

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward, and Rayfield. My name is Janet Yousey and I have the privilege of serving as CEO at Shangri-La. We support people experiencing a disability - at home, at work, and in the community. We serve approximately 500 people per year and employ approximately 400 staff. The majority of the people we support reside in District 5. I am here today to ask you to fully fund wages for Direct Support Professionals through Senate Bill 5529.

Last week, I saw a DSP communicating clearly and effectively, in a language tailored to the person she was supporting. All this while cooking a healthy meal and ensuring the person served, who wanted to sit a little too close to the hot grill, remained safe. Their language consisted of cheek-to-cheek touching, hand gestures, and a clear understanding of words that weren't clear to me.

Think about this. In a year full of loneliness and isolation, to see physical contact, understanding, patience, and compassion. Scenes such as this are happening right now all over Oregon - between DSPs and the people they come to work to support.

DSPs continue to show up and provide complex supports, despite a number of factors negatively impacting them, from:

- A global pandemic - DSPs never had the option to stay home and stay safe, to...
- Wildfires, evacuations, ice storms and power outages, to...
- An industry where pay leads DSPs to believe the work they love and consider valuable isn't actually valued and of course...
- Significant turnover because team members can make more in jobs that require much less -- like not being responsible for someone's life, and finally...
- Burnout from working overtime because agencies can't fill their vacancies.

So I plead with you -- invest in DSP wages. This investment will not only support an undervalued and critical workforce, but will also provide support and structure for people with disabilities. Please, fund SB 5529, focusing on raising DSP wages. Value the work and raise the wage.